



H.Res. 1127 – Condemning the endemic restrictions on freedom of the press and media and public expression in the Middle East and the concurrent and widespread presence of anti-Semitic material, Holocaust denial, and incitement to violence in the Arab media and press

FLOOR SITUATION

H.Res. 1127 is being considered on the floor under suspension of the rules and will require a two-thirds majority vote for passage. This legislation was introduced by Representative Gary Ackerman (D-NY) on April 22, 2008. The House Committee on Foreign Affairs agreed to the resolution by unanimous consent on April 30, 2008.

H.Res. 1127 is expected to be considered on the floor of the House on June 18, 2008.

SUMMARY

H.Res. 1127 resolves that the House of Representatives:

- Strongly condemns the endemic restrictions on freedom of the press and expression in the Arab world and the concurrent and widespread presence of anti-Semitic material, Holocaust denial, and incitement to violence in the Arab media and press;
- Deplores the methods and practices utilized by the governments in the Middle East to exert control over the press, and on public expression, including—
 - overt censorship;
 - intimidation and harassment of reporters, editors, and publishers by government agents, and through manipulation of the civil courts;
 - assaults by government agents on journalists and political activists;
 - arbitrarily enforced press and emergency laws; and
 - extra-legal restrictions on the kinds of topics which may be addressed either in public or in private;
- Expresses deep concern that some Arab governments, including some that are involved in multilateral efforts to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, use their government-owned, government-sanctioned, or government-controlled publishing houses and media to promulgate insidious, incendiary, and poisonous speech regarding Israel and the Jewish people that makes United States efforts to help resolve the Arab-Israeli conflict all the more difficult;
- Affirms the unshakable belief of the American people in the universal right of all persons to freely and peaceably express themselves, to publish and advocate for their nonviolent beliefs, and to petition their government for redress of their grievances;
- Calls on the President to—
 - raise the issue of the lack of media freedom in the Middle East and the proliferation of anti-Semitic incitement in all appropriate bilateral and multilateral fora;
 - take into account the compliance of governments throughout the region with international norms and obligations regarding media freedom and anti-Semitic incitement when determining the provision of United States assistance to those governments; and
 - utilize the existing public diplomacy apparatus, professional development, and democratization programs to focus on the issues of media freedom and anti-Semitic incitement; and
- Calls on United States allies and governments throughout the Middle East to publicly repudiate purveyors of anti-Semitic incitement.

BACKGROUND



LEGISLATIVE DIGEST

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Freedom House, a non-partisan international non-governmental organization, released a 2008 survey of global press freedom which found that the Middle East and North African region suffers one of the lowest levels of media freedom. Out of 18 states in the Middle East and North Africa, 15 countries received a rating of "not free". Kuwait, Lebanon and Egypt were rated as "partly free". Libya received the lowest rating for freedom of press in the region.

The Freedom House report also notes that there have been recent small increases in press freedom in Arab states. The survey indicates that, especially in Egypt, more Arab journalists are willing to challenge government restraints on the press.

[U.S. State Department - Freedom of Press](#)

STAFF CONTACT

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